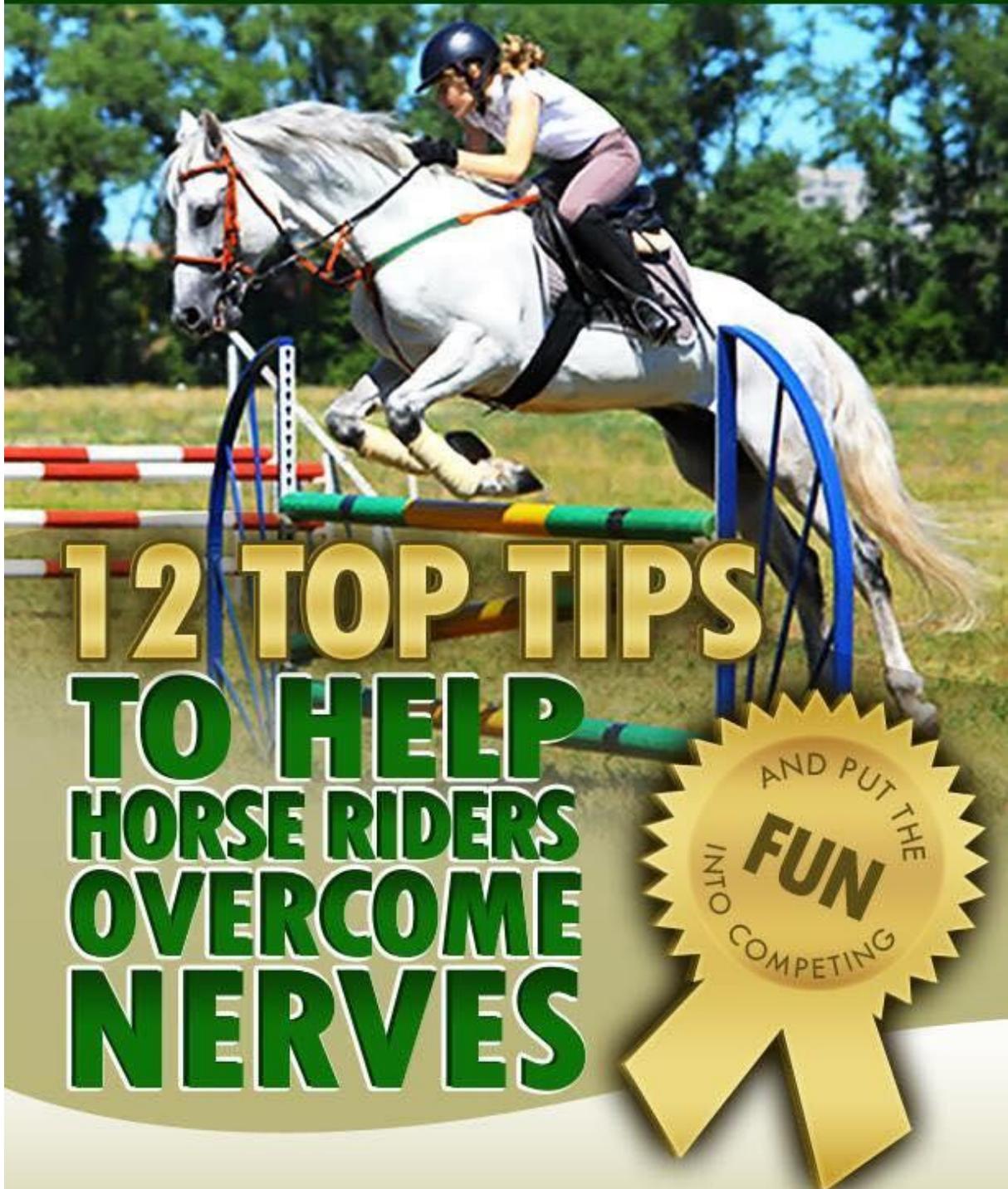


12 top tips to help Horse Riders to overcome nerves and put the fun into competing.

SHERREE RUSSELL



**12 TOP TIPS
TO HELP
HORSE RIDERS
OVERCOME
NERVES**



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Introduction

These tips are gleaned from my own experiences and a lifetime of collecting the help and information from the professionals that I've been fortunate to work for and with. If you apply them you will feel much more calm less nervous and will be able to relax and have fun at competitions. This will automatically begin to increase your confidence.

1. Preparation, preparation & practice!

I know this is something you will probably have heard before, but it's amazing how, the better prepared you are, the more relaxed you'll feel.

When you have rehearsed and practiced until the test, or course of jumps becomes second nature, it will all begin to feel easy and familiar and you'll feel so much happier and more confident.

You'll be able to relax more and just enjoy the day.



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2. **Take a support team.**

Enlisting the help of a friend who can read your test for you, or can help groom, or hold your horse when you need to rush off to the secretary's tent or walk the course, or put on that last bit of show sheen is absolutely priceless.

Ideally that friend should be an experienced, patient, calm and organised soul with your best interests at heart.

If no such paragon exists in your social group or family, consider hiring a groom for the day, or trade something you can offer in exchange for the services of a professional. It will be well worth the investment.



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3. **Allow plenty of time.**

Google the venue and your journey and load up the horsebox the night before, and have everything prepared.

Allow plenty of time for travelling, and loads of time to walk the course, and familiarise yourself with the show layout, and allow plenty of time to get ready for tests or classes.

Feeling rushed is not relaxing and is a major cause of anxiety and nerves.

When you are stressed you are not thinking “cleverly” either – your brain goes into “reflex” or purely reactive thinking and you will be prone to forget things, like parts of your test, or jumping course.



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4. **Remember to breathe !**

When I first started teaching students – I found myself often having to shout “...and breathe...” as invariably they’d be concentrating so much on the task in hand they’d end up red in the face, having forgotten to breathe.

It’s amazing how, when you take three deep breaths when you mount up, and again before you start your test or round, you can calm your nerves, and this can help you “centre” and stay in the present moment so that you can focus on what you need to do.

Don’t forget to keep breathing in the show ring.

Practice breathing at home in rhythm with your horse’s stride, or keep a metronome or chant in your head. Mine when show jumping was “..and forward, and calm, and rhythm, and straight.” to the canter beat.



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5. **Practice your focus.**

One of the greatest skills that successful competitors have is the ability to get into their “zone of optimum performance”.

This is a place where they can absolutely focus on your partnership with your horse and the task in hand - to the complete exception of anything else or any outside distractions.

This really does take practice, and needs to be done often at home before going out to competitions.

I often help clients to establish a shortcut using hypnosis to anchor the feeling of being in their “zone” onto the feel of the reins in their hands – or to another useful trigger they can use to bring back that state when needed.



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6. **Give yourself permission to be a learner and lose the ego.**

When you first start competing or have a new horse, aim to go out and do a “correct” round or test – and just have fun.

Remember – you are building a partnership based on communication and trust, and that takes a little time.

Plan to enjoy the journey - not plan to win first time out.

Horses are great levellers and will constantly surprise you - and even the professionals have their off days.

Believe me, if you are out to impress someone your focus will be entirely in the wrong place, and things are much more likely to go wrong!



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7. **Compete below the level that you are working on at home.**

You will feel much more relaxed when you and your horse are working well within your education and familiar zone.

Keep things comfortable for yourself and your horse.

There will be enough distractions on the day, so make it easy for you and your horse to get it right and enjoy the day without the added pressure of performing tricky new stuff.



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8. **Do lots of small unaffiliated shows, or riding club clinics or group lessons.**

This will help to socialise your horse with other horses and new venues and get it used to going out to “parties”.

You’ll also get used to preparing yourself and your horse for travelling, and dressing for competing.

It will then become second nature to load up the lorry or trailer with all the stuff you need to ensure you enjoy your day.

There’s nothing guaranteed to ensure stress more than forgetting something!



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9. **Find yourself a mentor.**

It's absolutely invaluable to get yourself some help from someone who has been there. A friend or trainer that can encourage, advise and guide you.

You will probably find that it's easier than you think to find a mentor. Generally people are flattered to be asked for help, and genuinely want to "put back" into a sport they love, and help novices progress.

This will also stop you making unnecessary and common mistakes that would frustrate and distract you, like legal tack and standards of dress codes for example.



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10. **Be kind to yourself.**

Remember the aim of the day is to have a pleasant and enjoyable experience for yourself and your horse.

Turn off the negative self talk and cut yourself some slack. You might not even be aware of how much you are beating yourself up mentally.

Now's the time to wake up and strengthen your internal coach.

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11. **Celebrate each small success.**

The way we learn confidence in any area is to gain evidence of our successes. One small success builds into bigger successes, and increases confidence and self efficacy, which our feeling of being able to cope in any given situation.

A great thing to remember is

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS FAILURE – ONLY FEEDBACK!

Take the time to enjoy outings to the beach or happy hacking with friends, or learning some ground skills to play with your horse. It's all good experience for your horse and will develop your partnership and trust.



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12. **Take a little time to learn how to quickly get into the correct emotional state for the job in hand.**

A few sessions of Hypnosis and NLP have been proven to really help with horse riders' relaxation and focus and their ability to quickly get into their "zone".

Hypnosis can also help to destabilise and reduce the memory of past accidents and incidents.

It will also help you to link back into all the good positive fun stuff, and find skills and resources you haven't even realised you had!

How much would that help you to put the joy back into your riding?



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Hypnotherapy is a wonderful stress free way of accessing unconscious strengths, resources and emotional states to help you overcome past fears and negative programs, and put the joy back in your riding.

I see clients at my home in Surrey, and address each client's specific issues. Generally I would expect that we can achieve significant results in two to three sessions.

I am in a unique position of being able to combine my previous Equestrian training with Clinical Hypnosis degree, and have been privileged now, to work with hundreds of equestrian clients from Novice to Professional level.

You will find many stories and testimonials on my website.

If you would like to find out more about how Equestrian Sports Hypnosis can help you - whether you'd like help to increase your confidence, overcome nerves or to improve your performance, I would be delighted to have a chat with you.

Please contact me for a no obligation consultation.

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